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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

*Self
Bundy*

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

21 April 1962

Refer to: I-4827/62

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION, FRIDAY, 20 April 1962

Participants: ✓ Mr. Fritz Erler
 ✓ Mr. Hltze

Place: ASD/ISA's office

Erler said he wished to discuss two questions. One of them was Berlin and the other was NATO strategy. I said that I had just returned from Germany where I had delivered a speech which outlined certain ideas, and that both General Schnez and Von Hase of the Foreign Office had said they had read it with care and found themselves in agreement. Erler said he had also read the speech and found himself in agreement. He said there were certain points of emphasis, however, on which he thought German views and U.S. views might still differ. I agreed with this but pointed out that it would be helpful if we could identify a major area of common agreement. Then we could discuss with greater precision those other points where we had somewhat differing views. Erler agreed.

He then referred to Strauss' recent speech before the Bundestag, and said that he thought this represented a considerable improvement in Strauss' views. Strauss now had publicly committed himself to the opinion that the U.S. President's voice should be controlling in the last analysis. Previously, Strauss had believed that European members of NATO should have an independent power of decision and that Germany might play a special role in that context. He said that it was his, Erler's opinion, that a European nuclear force would be disastrous to the cohesion of the Alliance. I said I also doubted its advisability.

Erler then referred to the Information program and hoped we really intended to give the information the Germans now anticipated receiving. He referred to the proposal that we agree not to withdraw nuclear weapons without German concurrence.

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I said this would require careful wording if we were not to have any misunderstanding. Erler then referred to the proposal that German concurrence be obtained before weapons stationed in Germany were used. I did not comment.

Erler went on to say that he did not see the need for a multilateral force. I said that we might very well again propose such a force for consideration. Erler said that in his view it was absolutely essential that the United States President retain his responsibility for the release of warheads. He thought this was important to the full effectiveness of the deterrent in Soviet eyes.

I then outlined our views as to why a multilateral force might be desirable.

Erler then turned the discussion to the question of Berlin. He stressed the seriousness of the August 13th development. I made the point that this was also a serious political question in the U.S. - that many in the U.S. thought we should have acted at the time. I pointed out that no one in Berlin or in West Germany had advocated the use of force at the time. Erler concurred, saying that Carlo Schmidt was the only person who had raised a contrary voice. Erler questioned, however, the soundness of the contingency planning at the time of the Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Paris preceding August 13th. As he understood it, no one had believed it feasible for the Communists to cut the City in half. He referred to an associate of his who even before August 13th had pointed out to the Americans in Berlin the possibility that the Communists might do this, and had expressed the opinion that they could succeed if they were sufficiently brutal in their means of execution. I commented that the opinion at the time of the Paris meeting had in fact been that it would not be possible for the Communists to cut the City in half, but that the more likely course was that they would isolate the entire City to cut off the flow of refugees.

Erler then talked about the look with respect to the U.S. suggested negotiating position. He said he knew nothing about this except what he read in the papers. He suggested, however, that we look carefully at the question of whether a distinction should not be made between civilian traffic, military traffic and air access. He saw no reason why civilian traffic should not be controlled by the International Access Authority. He thought we should not subject our military traffic to international control.

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This would tend to undermine the clarity of our occupation rights. He also thought that to put air access under International control would be dangerous. As to participation in the International Access Authority, he thought it was one thing to have the East German representative put on a par with the West German representative, but quite a different thing to have the East German representative put on a par with the U.S. He, therefore, suggested that the position of the four powers be differentiated from the position of the other members of the Authority. To put the East Germans on a par with the United States would be tantamount to recognition of the renunciation of hope for reunification.

Erlor said he hoped we would not give nuclear information to the French. He thought this would increase pressure in Germany for a nuclear force of its own. I stated that U.S. policy was and continued to be that we would not assist in the further development of national nuclear capabilities.

Erlor then discussed the internal political scene in Germany. He said that Strauss' chances to succeed Adenauer had been seriously diminished, at least for the next few years. He referred to Brentano's efforts to diminish Schroeder's chances. He thought Erhardt was the likely candidate, but that Kroene might be a dark horse. He said that Kroene would be fine from the SPD standpoint. He thought they could easily defeat him in an election, but that he would be a poor Chancellor from the standpoint of German interests. He spoke favorably of Hoeller as an up-coming person in the SPD. He also spoke favorably of Helmut Schmidt and of his recent book on military strategy.

(Signed) Paul H. Nitze

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